

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 2343

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, UNSC, LT, SF
SUBJECT: LESOTHO COMPLAINT AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA

REF: MASERU 1565

1. SUMMARY: THE DEPT WILL NO DOUBT ALREADY HAVE SENSED (FROM REFTTEL AND PREVIOUS) THE IMPORTANCE ATTACHED BY LESOTHO AUTHROITIES TO GOL COMPLAINT AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA RE TRANSKEI. FONMIN MOLAPO'S PRESENCE AT HEAD OF GOL DELEGATION IS ONE INDICATION OF SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH GOL REGARDS THIS ISSUE. BUT THERE ARE OTHER MORE IMPORTANT, IF LESS VISIBLE, INDICATIONS THAT THIS IS THE ENTRAL OVERRIDING ISSUE IN GOL FOREIGN POLICY, ONE BY WHICH LESOTHO MAY WELL DETERMINE WHO ARE ITS FRIENDS (AND ADVERSARIES) FOR SOME TIME TO COME. END SUMMARY.

2. THE PRINCIPAL REASONS FOR LESOTHO'S UNIQUE DEGREE OF INVOLVEMENT IN THIS PROBLEM MAY BEAR REPEATING AT THIS TIME:

(A) ONLY LESOTHO IS COMPLETELY SURROUNDED BY SOUTH AFRICA, WHOSE ACTIONS HAVE PRECIPITATED THE CURRENT CONFRONTATION RE TRANSKEI;

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(B) ONLY LESOTHO HAS COMMON BORDER WITH THE TRANSKEI AREA WITH ALL THE DIRECT ECONOMIC, DIPLOMATIC AND POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES THIS BRINGS:

(C) THE POLICY OF REFUSING RECOGNITION FOR TRANSKEI IS SHARED BY ALL BUT ONE UN MEMBER GOL TAKES THE VIEW THAT THE ECONOMIC

BURDENS OF THAT POLICY SHOULD BE SIMILARLY SHARED;

(D) THE GOL FEELS THOROUGHLY EXPOSED AND VULNERABLE, A FEELING IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO EXAGGERATE; IT IS TO BE EXPECTED THEREFORE THAT THIS WOULD BECOME AN EMOTIONAL AS WELL AS A POLITICAL/ DIPLOMATIC ISSUE.

3. SINCE LESOTHO HAS (UNTIL RECENTLY, AT LEAST) BEEN A RELIABLE SOURCE OF SUPPORT FOR POSITIONS IN THE UN DEEMED IMPORTANT TO THE U.S., IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT U.S. ATTITUDE AND VOTE ON LESOTHO'S COMPLAINT WILL BE OF UNUSUAL IMPORTANCE TO GOL. GOL WANTS AND EXPECTS BOTH POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SUPPORT, ESPECIALLY AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL REASSURANCE IN STANDING UP TO ITS POWERFUL NEIGHBOR. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECT IS INDEED PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT SINCE THERE ARE ALREADY A NUMBER OF INDICATION (E.G. PARA 4 REFTEL) THAT FINANCING FOR EXPANDING ROAD SYSTEM IS ALREADY ASSURED. GIVEN OUR PROBLEM IN FINANCING INFRASTRUCTURE, PERHAPS AS A MINIMUM THE LANGUAGE OF ANY RESOLUTION MIGHT BE BROADENED TO ENABLE US TO PORTRAY ONGOING USAID PROGRAMS AS PROOF OF U.S. SUPPORT.

4. CONCLUSION: THERE IS NO AVOIDING THE FACT THAT U.S. ATTITUDES ON THE CURRENT GOL COMPLAINT RE SOUTH AFRICA WILL BE FUNDAMENTAL IN OUR RELATIONS FOR A LONG TIME TO COME.
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